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FM AMEMBASSY SUVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3469
INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1388
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 0983
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1169
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 000512

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/22/2016
TAGS: PREL MARR ASEC CASC FJ
SUBJECT: FIJI UPDATE 11/22 - A RATHER QUIET DAY IN SUVA

REF: SUVA 509 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

RFMF Senior Officer says will refuse unlawful order

¶1. (C) Colonel Henry Manulevu is Commander nation-wide for Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) "territorial" forces (reservists). The RFMF called up all territorial forces a few weeks ago for an "annual" exercise. There are reports the territorials will be called up again within the next week or so. Manulevu, headquartered in Lautoka in Fiji's West, told the DCM this week that, if faced with an illegal order, he will refuse to comply. While the territorial forces would not be key to any coup attempt -- the third infantry regiment (3FIR) located in Suva is the armed, operational force -- to the extent Col. Manulevu's comment reflects a broader view within the RFMF, it would be an encouraging sign. Unfortunately, the two ranking officers over 3FIR -- Land Forces Commander Col. Driti and 3FIR Commander Lt. Col. Mara -- to date have exhibited firm loyalty to Bainimarama and his statements.

Bainimarama showing the GCC no respect

¶2. (U) In a media interview in Fijian on Nov. 21, Commodore Bainimarama reportedly dismissed the relevance of the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) to Fiji's current crisis, suggesting GCC mediators and their advisors "should meet under a mango tree and enjoy home brew" if they cannot convince PM Qarase to agree to the RFMF's set of demands. GCC Chairman Bokini reportedly reacted that Bainimarama's "attack" on the GCC was "disgusting." Fijians generally give a great deal of emphasis in personal dealings to "respect." Bokini urged the Fiji populace to evaluate Bainimarama's disrespectful approach.

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